Theatre

Theatrical activities in the classroom can range from simple role plays and improvisational games to full scale productions integrating art, music, and dance. Creative dramatics activities are an excellent across-the-curriculum teaching and learning tool. Students learn appreciation for theatre arts through hands-on activities and through live performances. A televised version of a play or a storytelling performance can be wonderful, but it is essential that students also see live theatre. If you have a theatre or storytelling residency, consult with your artist about performance possibilities. S/he may be able to include an assembly performance as part of the residency.

There are also performance groups who will come to your school for single or multiple performances. For a list of juried storytellers and performers, contact the Kentucky Center for the Arts at (502)-562-0100 and request their Arts Education Showcase book. If you would like to preview the performances, plan to attend one of the Arts Education showcases sponsored by the Kentucky Center for the Arts at various locations around the state in the spring.

There are several theaters that specialize in performances for students. (See the list of Useful Addresses at the end of the book.) Many colleges also have performances suitable for school audiences. Some will arrange backstage tours. This is a good way to help students understand the diversity of jobs associated with the theatre.

Another good way to promote awareness of the varied skills it takes to mount a theatrical production is to allow your students to take on these varied jobs in classroom performances. This allows students with a variety of talents to feel that they have made an important contribution to the performance. When they attend performances, they will have a heightened appreciation for aspects such as costuming and sound effects.

Videotaping and reviewing rehearsals is an excellent way to allow students to see their own performances and think of ways to improve them before they actually perform for an audience. A critique done after a rehearsal (whether it is a self critique or you employ students as a practice audience) can help students focus on the effective use of the elements of theatre. After a final performance, however, there is no time for improvement. Student performers (or costume designers or assistant directors) do not need negative feedback at this point. They need praise, and lots of it! Such praise must be honest and specific. ("You spoke very clearly," or, "Your body language expressed the anger your character felt," or, "The costumes fit the era of the play very well.")

Do not overlook storytelling as a component of your theatre curriculum. Storytelling and acting are two quite different skills, but they are both part of creative dramatics. Although storytelling and creative writing share many common elements (sense of story, verbal imagery, audience awareness...), storytelling must be included as a valid art in its own right and not just utilized as a springboard for writing or portfolio pieces.

From Picture Book to Play
Activity Contributed by Judy Sizemore

Grade level:	**Primary**
Materials:	**A selection of picture books**
Time:	**5 sessions - 60 minutes each**

Core Content Addressed:

Creating/Performing: Revise a short story passage into a simple dialogue format. (2.22)

Identify and describe basic scenery, props, and costumes that would be appropriate for the plot and characters in a short script or story. (2.22, 2.23)

Select and communicate information about people, time, and place related to a script, scenario, or classroom dramatization. (2.22, 2.23, 2.24)

Responding: Using a short script or story, identify and describe the characters, their relationships, and their environments. (2.24, 2.25, 2.26)

Overview: Students analyze a number of picture books and select one to develop into a class play. This activity introduces the elements of drama and theatre jobs while reinforcing language arts and visual arts skills. It can be integrated with other areas of the curriculum, especially an exploration of diverse cultures. The art and/or music teachers might be willing to collaborate with you on this project. The computer teacher might find some older students who can type the script.

Activity: <u>Session One:</u> Using a sheet of chart paper sideways, make four wide columns labeled name of book, characters, plot, and setting. Write the name of five of your class' favorite picture books in the column labeled name of book. Draw lines across your chart to make a 4 x 5 grid. Hold the books up one after the other and ask students to tell you what each book is about. As they respond, jot down their answers in the appropriate column. If no one mentions the setting of a book, ask where and/or when the story took place.

Tell the students you want them to choose one of the stories to make into a play. Facilitate a discussion about which story to select for your play. Encourage students to think in terms of which story has good dramatic potential and to articulate reasons for their choices.

Once the story has been selected, ask students what you will need to make the story into a play. On a fresh sheet of chart paper, begin to list the jobs that will need to be accomplished and the title of the person who will be in charge of that job. For example, if students say you will need costumes, list "need costumes - costume designer." Ask students leading question such as, "How will the actors remember what to say? Do we need someone to write the dialogue? Those people would be the script writers." "How can we let the

audience know the story is taking place in a jungle? Would sound effects help?"
Help them think of as many jobs as possible. Here are some possibilities:

Act the parts of the characters - actors
Write down the parts - script writers
> (Depending on your class, you may have to take the major responsibility for this, but be sure to allow students to have some input.)

Help the actors remember their lines - assistant director
Make the scenery - set designers
Find or make costumes - costume designers
Create sound effects - sound engineers
Move the props around during the play - stage hands
> (These students will need a second job during the preparation stages.)

Let people know about the play - public relations people
Keep everything organized - director

Allow students to make choices about the jobs they will undertake and record the choices. You may want to retain the role of director for yourself, but allow a student to be assistant director.

<u>Session Two:</u> Before you actually begin working on your jobs, you need to make some group decisions. Will your story have a narrator? Will you have separate scenes? Clear a large area to use as a temporary stage and ask your students leading questions such as, "What will be the first thing to happen in the play? Who will do that? Where will they be standing? Will anyone else be in this scene? What will they do? What will they say? How will they feel? How can they show with their faces what they are feeling? What should the scenery look like? How could we make that? What will the characters be wearing? Do we have something we can use or make to look like that? Will we need any props? How will we make them? What about sound effects?"

Run through the entire play, taking notes about how each scene will be organized and what materials you will need. Refer back to the book as needed, but give yourselves permission to make changes. After all, the book was not written as a script, so you will probably need to make adaptations.

Emphasize to students that you will need to improvise using the materials you have in the classroom or that they can bring from home. Remind them, too, that you have only a certain amount of time to spend on the project. You can probably use bulletin board paper for the backdrop. There may be props you can borrow from the preschool room or library. Students can be wonderfully inventive. You also want to keep the script as simple as possible. Use short lines and lots of action.

<u>Session Three:</u> As a group, complete an Drama Elements web for each scene. A blank web is included on page 87 and a sample web on page 88. You

may want to make large webs that the whole class can see at once. This will ensure that everyone has the same basic concepts as you begin to work.

Organize the students into groups according to their jobs. The actors and assistant director may work with the script writers or the costume designers during this part. Make a list of the tasks for each group. As they work on their tasks, circulate and give assistance where needed.

Session Four and Subsequent Session: As students complete their tasks, begin to practice the play. When the script is complete, make sure it is legible and make copies for each character/narrator and the assistant director. Help each character/narrator highlight his/her own lines. You may chose to let the students use the scripts as they perform, in the tradition of reader's theater. If so, make each student a neat folder for their script that will allow them to turn the pages and find their places easily. (Some students will do a better job without the scripts.)

As you practice, enlist some of the designers to be your practice audience. Be sure to teach them proper audience skills. Tell them that when your real audience comes, they can set the example of how audiences behave.

After each scene, lead a quick discussion, maximizing praise and minimizing criticism. Always allow the actors to speak first, critiquing their own performance. Let the audience join the discussion about what to do when certain things happen. What do you do if you forget your line? How can the assistant director let you know that you need to speak louder? Do you need some signals? Were the sound effects at the right time? As you work, you may need to do some adjustments to costumes, props, and sets.

When you are almost ready for your performance, have students complete a self evaluation ("My Theatre Job" - page 86). This is best to do before the final performance as it gives students time to think about any improvements they want to make. After the performance is the time for congratulations and praise.

Make this process as easy on yourself as possible. Instead of trying to make a huge production of the story and get everything just right, do it as simply as possible and repeat the process with another story, maybe several stories. Student performances - and the overall flow of the activity - will improve enormously each time. You may want to do your first story for another class and save a parent performance for your second or third attempt. Encourage students to explore different jobs in subsequent productions.

If possible, video the performances. Students (and parents) love to check the videos out and watch them. It also gives them a chance to show it to other family members who might have missed the show. It is a wonderful way to increase parent involvement and communication.

Follow-up Activities: When you go to live performances or watch televised performances, lead a class discussion about all the different jobs that went into the production. Watch a TV show or movie together and pay attention to the credits. Compare and contrast the jobs involved in putting on a play and the jobs involved in making a movie or a TV show.

My Theatre Job

Name _____

I am the _____

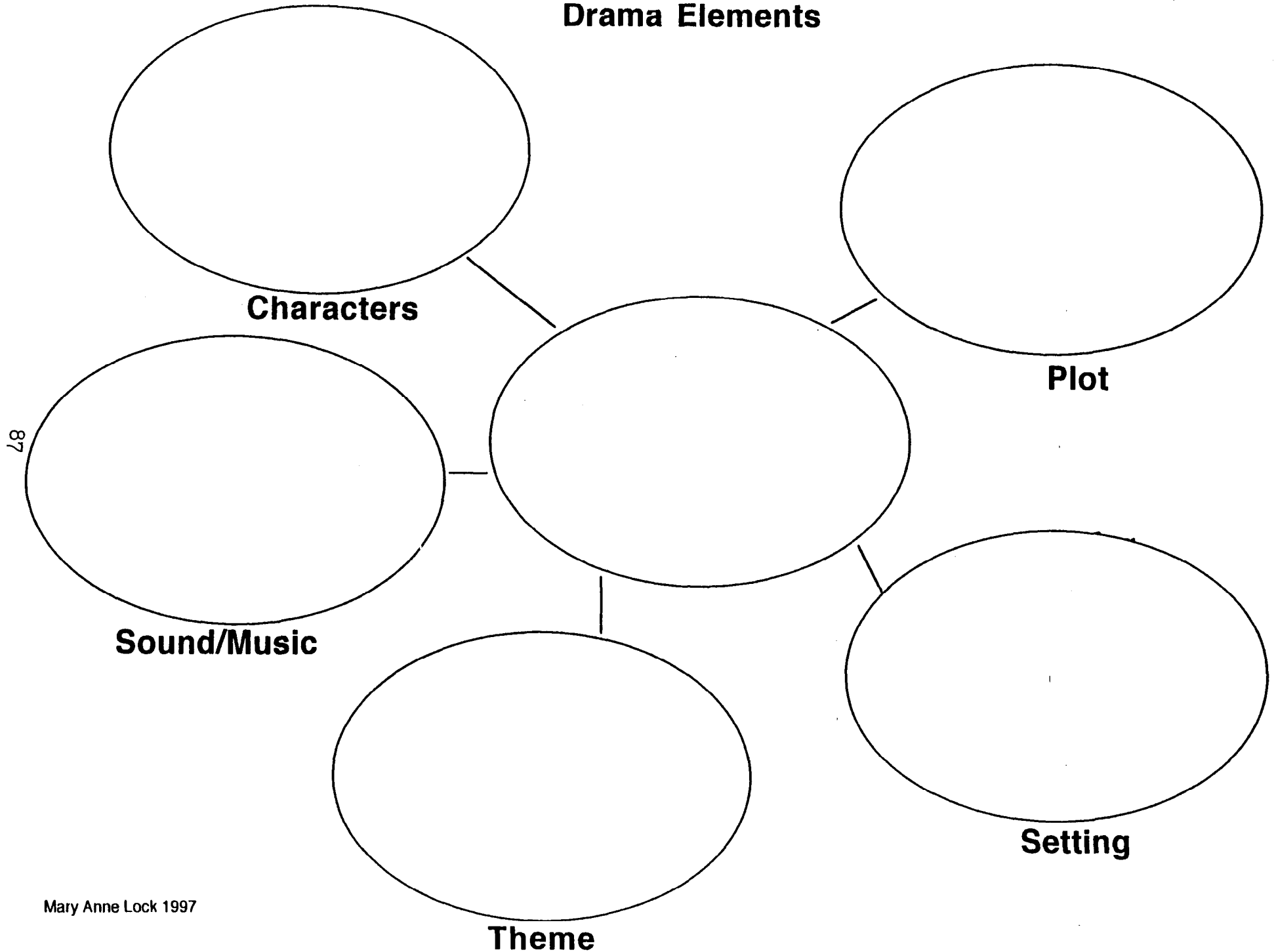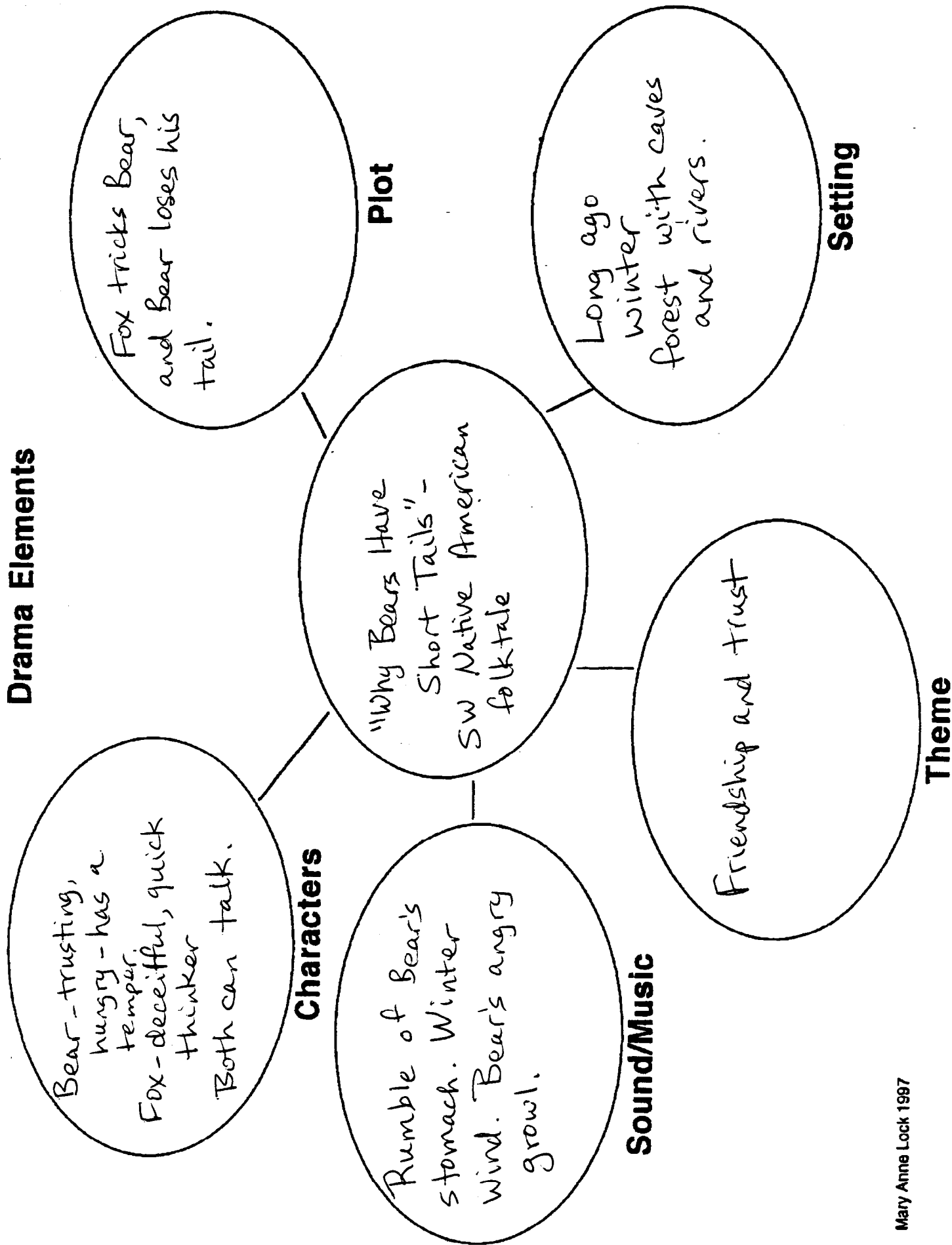My job is to _____

_____

I think I am doing a good job of _____

_____

_____

Next time I will do a better job of _____

_____

_____

Draw a picture of your job in the space below.

Drama Elements

Characters

Plot

Sound/Music

Setting

Theme

87

Drama Elements

Plot

Fox tricks Bear, and Bear loses his tail.

Setting

Long ago winter forest with caves and rivers.

"Why Bears Have Short Tails" - SW Native American folktale

Characters

Bear - trusting, hungry - has a temper
Fox - deceitful, quick thinker
Both can talk.

Sound/Music

Rumble of Bear's stomach. Winter wind. Bear's angry growl.

Theme

Friendship and trust

Commedia dell'Arte
Activities Contributed by Jean St. John

Grade level:	middle-high
Materials:	large, open space
	Student handouts
Time:	60 minutes for the introduction and improvisation. Additional sessions for follow-up activities.

Core Content Addressed:

Creating/Performing:

Improvise short dialogues and monologues to tell stories; refine and record the dialogue and action. (2.23, 2.24, 2.25, 2.26)

In an ensemble, assume roles that communicate aspects for a character and contribute to the action based on experience, imagination, or characters in literature, history, or scripts. (1.15, 2.22, 2.23, 2.24, 2.25, 2.26)

Demonstrate acting skills to develop character behaviors based on observations of interactions, ethical choices, and emotional responses of people. (2.22, 2.23)

Responding: Discuss ways in which theatre artists in different cultures present dramatizations in different ways. (2.22, 2.23, 2.24)

Develop and describe character behaviors based on observations of interactions, ethical choices, and emotional responses of people. (2.22, 2.23)

Overview: Commedia dell'Arte is included in the eleventh grade humanities requirement, but Commedia activities are suitable for middle school students as well. The following activities will allow students to explore characters and situations in a historical and cultural context. They will improvise short scenes or "lazzi," the comic business, of several stock characters. In these activities they will discover that their audience is their partner. Since all the scenes are comic, they will know immediately if the scene is working or not. In the discussions, they will be able to solicit responses to their scenes. While these scenes are hundreds of years old, they will be a new artistic presentation between the students and the audience.

Introduction: Either have your students read the "Commedia dell'Arte" sheet (page 92) or summarize the contents for them. Provide a quick warm-up activity that will prepare them for the large, physical movements of Commedia and will warm the voice. (See "Focus on the Ball," page 98.)

Activity: Distribute the "Commedia Characters" (page 93) sheets to students and review them quickly as a group. Using exaggerated movements, demonstrate how a certain character might move or sound. Ask students to demonstrate how other characters might move or sound. Remind them that Commedia characters traditionally wore half masks covering part of their faces so large, physical movements are very important.

Be loose and have fun. Do not spend too much time on this. You are after spontaneous improvisations, not presentations that have been thought out in advance.

Distribute the "Lazzi" sheets (page 94) and quickly select students to act the parts in each lazzo. (Lazzo is the singular form of lazzi.)

Do not give them directions. Allow them to interact freely. If you have a very shy group, you may have to get them started by taking one of the parts yourself. Ham it up to encourage the students.

Discussion: After the lazzi have been played, lead a class discussion of the scenes. Focus on the following questions:

1. Were the characters believable? Were they committed to the scene? Did they stay in character throughout the scene?
2. Did they capture the spirit of the Commedia character? How did their movements or the way they used their voices help to communicate the personality of their character?
3. Did the characters work together well?
4. Did they support each other?
5. Did you laugh at the scene? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities:
1. Ask students to find stock characters in the shows, movies, or cartoons they watch. Compare and contrast them to some of the stock characters in Commedia.

2. Invent stock characters of your own. Use some of the Commedia characteristics (the braggart, the money lover, the comic servant, etc.) and give them a modern interpretation. Give your characters names and make up short "lazzi" to improvise. Have students use the "Getting into Character" (page 95) form to develop and refine their characters.

3. Select several scenes that show promise, either from the original Commedia improvisations or from your original "lazzi." Have the students rehearse the scene and perform it for a small audience. Ask the audience to critique the performance of the characters using the "Critique of a Theatrical Performance" form (pages 96-97). Review the critiques and use them to guide refinement of your performances.

4. Write the dialogue for your improvisation. Most teachers want to have students write the dialogue before the performance, but this sequence can often diminish the performance. Students become so focused on memorizing dialogue that they lose their comic spontaneity. Writing the dialogue after the performance allows your class to save the idea for future use or for future classes to use without hampering the present performance. If you do want to write the dialogue before the performance, encourage students to focus on remembering their characters and the basic outline of the plot, not on memorizing their lines word for word.

5. Have students draw stage sets for the scenes. Have them visualize environment and make design choices to communicate locale and mood using visual elements (Academic Expectations 2.23, 2.24).

6. Select one or more scenes and actually create the set. Add costumes, masks, props, or sound and lighting effects if desired. This can be as simple or as complex as you choose. Perform for the school or community. Have students write and narrate a brief introduction to the history of Commedia.

7. Involve students in publicizing the performance. Write announcements for the local paper and radio. Make and distribute posters and invitations. Create a playbill to distribute at the performance.

Resources:

1. Commedia Dell'Arte, A Scene Study Book by Bari Rolfe Personabooks
   6542 Dana Street
   Oakland, CA 94609
2. Improvisation for the Theater by Viola Spolin
   Northwest University Press
   Evanston, IL 60201
3. Lazzi, the Comic Routines of the Commedia dell'Arte by Mel Gordon
   Performing Arts Journal Publications
   New York
4. Theatre Game File and Theatre Games for the Classroom by Viola Spolin
   Northwest University Press
   Evanston, IL 60201
5. Scenarios for the Commedia dell'Arte
   Flamino Scala's Teatro Dell Favole Rappresentative
   Translated and edited by Henry F. Salerno

Commedia dell'Arte
by Jean St. John

The Commedia dell'Arte originated during the Italian Renaissance. Actors traveled throughout Europe performing scenarios of improvisational comedy from the 1400's through the early 1800's. They wore half masks of the stock characters - Arlecchino, Pantalone, Capitano, Doctorie, Columbine, Zanni, and many more. All characters had at their disposal physical comedy routines called "Lazzi," poetry, speeches, etc. that they could perform at the drop of a hat. Each performance was different and yet very much the same. The performances would often be topical, depending on where they were playing. These were improvisational players with exceptional skill. Their art form is still with us today.

The Commedia dell'Arte form, still recognizable in its traditional form throughout Europe, has left a profound influence on theatre and culture. The images of the diamond design coat and half mask or Arlecchino (or Harlequin), the white faced Pierrot and the Columbine all have come to represent a lively, vibrant theatre. Commedia dell'Arte has left us with a rich legacy of visual art, influencing Picasso and others. But it is the influence it has left on the theatre that is most significant.

The roots of Commedia dell'Arte reach back to the Atellan farces in Rome, the medicine shows from the Middle Ages, and the jesters who entertained kings and queens in their courts. The influence of the plot outline scenario is with us today in improvisational comedy from Paul Sills and Viola Spolin's work in Chicago and in TV comedy shows like *Saturday Night Live*. It has influenced sitcoms with stock characters and situation comedies such as *I Love Lucy, MASH, The Dick Van Dyke Show, Cheers,* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show.*

Historically the Commedia dell'Arte influenced playwrights like Moliere and Shakespeare. Moliere performed with a Commedia troupe for fifteen years. Many Commedia plot outlines can be found in the bones of Shakespeare plays.

It was the spirit of their playing that captures our imaginations today. Modern Commedia troupes include the Marx Brothers, the Harlem Globetrotters, the cast of the sitcoms listed above, and the early *Saturday Night Live* cast. It is the ability to respond quickly, to think on their feet, and to make the audience laugh that distinguishes these modern day Commedia performers.

Commedia Characters

During the Italian Renaissance the feudal system was still in place. Getting the best of the master was ripe comedy for any crowd. The characters in the Commedia are divided into master, servant, and lover.

Master Characters

Capitano was the only character from outside Italy. He came from Spain. The Spanish had invaded Italy and had many "Capitanos." Capitano is played as a braggart who is afraid of his own shadow. The scenes that revolve around him are mocking scenes in which he swaggers and the other characters frighten him.

Pantalone is in love with money. (His character appears as Shylock in Shakespeare's <u>Merchant of Venice.</u>) He is a merchant who wears a tight fitting red Turkish outfit and had a brown mask with a hooked nose.

Doctorie is an educated man from the University of Bologna, but he is foolish and speaks in gibberish. He is boring to the other characters. He has a large, pot belly and wears a half mask that covers only his nose and eyebrows.

Servant Characters

Arlecchino is one of the most celebrated zanni. (A zanni is a generic name for a comic servant.) Arlecchino became Harlequin in England and France. He wore a patchwork coat, which later became the diamond shaped coat. He had a high, parrot-like voice, was agile, acrobatic, and constantly hungry.

Columbine is a smart, pretty, and agile servant, who is often flirtatious. She is the character who always knows what is going on. She is a schemer.

Lover Characters
The lover characters were in love with themselves.

Isabella, the daughter of one of the merchants, is beautiful, chaste, and educated, with a mind of her own. Most scenarios revolved around her father trying to marry her off to one of the other, older masters. She would be in love with Leandro, another lover character. The plot would progress around the servants helping the lovers. All would end well.

Lazzi

Lazzi means "comic stage business." Each lazzo will give the characters the basis for their improvisation. These are the bones of the act. One lazzo could be five to ten minutes of "stage business." (The singular of lazzi is lazzo.)

Lazzo of Brave Capitano

Characters: Capitano, Arlecchino, Columbine

Situation: The Capitano - gallant, brave, pompous - tells of his brave battles, his conquests and boasts of his past deeds. Enter Arlecchino, the quick footed servant with a parrot like voice. As his servant, he eggs him on while mocking him behind his back. The Capitano becomes suspicious but Arlecchino keeps him going. Capitano is most afraid of women. Add the flirtatious Columbine to keep Capitano on his toes.

Lazzo of the Fighting Capitanos

Characters: Two Capitanos

Situation: Two Capitanos meet ready for battle. They pose, strut, and draw their swords. They battle furiously and yet never touch.

Lazzo of the Hungry Servant, # 1

Characters: Columbine, Arlecchino

Situation: Columbine is fixing a meal for the household. She needs Arlecchino's help even though she knows he will try to eat all the food. She knows he will try to snatch all the food away, but she knows all of his tricks. She can distract him and take back the stashed food.

Lazzo of the Hungry Servant, #2

Characters: Master characters at a feast, Arlecchino

Situation: Arlecchino is a waiter who wants to eat. He tries to get food from the masters and finally yells, "Fire!" All the other characters run offstage. Arlecchino sits down to eat as much as he can before the others return.

Lazzo of the Tooth Extractor

Characters: Doctorie, Pantalone

Situation: The Doctorie examines Pantalone's teeth. Pantomiming the use of ridiculous and oversized tools, he keeps pulling the wrong teeth.

Getting Into Character

Name of actor _____

Name of character _____

Describe your character's personality. _____

_____

How do you think you can show your character's personality through your voice and your movements? _____

_____

_____

What will your character express during the scene? How can you show what the character wants through voice and movement?

_____

_____

_____

_____

When you have completed this form, discuss your character with your director to make sure that you agree on what your character is like.

After each performance, ask someone in the audience to critique your performance so that you will know if your ideas are working. Can the audience tell what your character's personality is? Can they tell what your character wants? What might you do to improve your performance?

Critique of a Theatrical Performance

by _____

Name of play _____

Name of character _____

Dramatic Elements

1. Describe the role of the character in the scene.

_____

_____

2. Describe the character's motivation in the scene. What did they want? Was the character involved in a conflict?

_____

_____

Performance Elements

1. Describe the personality of the character. In what ways (through action, tone of voice, or movement) did the actor show the character's personality?

_____

_____

_____

2. Did the actor use his/her voice effectively? Did he/she speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard? Did the actor show emotion through his/her voice? Which emotion? At what point in the story?

_____

_____

3. What was the best thing about the way the actor used his/her voice? What else might an actor do?

_____

_____

_____

4. Did the actor use movement (body language) effectively? Did the actor remember not to turn his/her back on the audience and not to step in front of another actor? Did the actor show expression through movement?

_____

_____

_____

5. What was the best thing about the way the actor used movement? What else might an actor do?

_____

_____

_____

6. Did the actor "stay in character" throughout the play? Were the actors committed to their roles? Give examples to support your answer.

_____

_____

_____

7. Additional Comments:

_____

_____

Focus on the Ball
Warm-up Activities Contributed by Jean St. John

Grade level:	**Middle-high**
Materials:	**Large, open space**
	10-15 bean bags or
	tennis balls
	Additional props
	(optional)
Time:	**10-15 minutes**
Core Content Addressed:	
Elements of Performance:	
Concentration, listening	

Overview: The following are two warm-up games that can be used to warm up for the Commedia dell'Arte lesson or other theatre activities. They are designed to help a group focus as an ensemble and are excellent theatre games. Students must focus on each other, listen and wait for their turn. These games are also good for whenever you need to refocus your classroom energy.

Introduction: Clear out an open space in your classroom. Both games require students to stand in a circle.

Activity:

Ball Game One: Stand in the circle with your students. Explain that you are going to establish a pattern for throwing the ball (or bean bag) that will allow each student to receive and throw the ball once. The ball should end up where it began. Make eye contact with a student, say their name out loud and toss the ball to them underhand. Instruct the student to pass the ball to another student using the same sequence -- make eye contact, speak the name out loud, and toss the ball underhand. Repeat this until each student has had a chance to catch and toss the ball and the ball has come back to you. Repeat this same pattern several times. Then add a second ball to the pattern after you have started the first ball on its rounds. Add as many of the balls as your group can handle. Remind the students that they only need to be concerned with two people - the one who throws them the ball and the one they throw the ball to. They need to make eye contact, say the name out loud, and toss the ball underhand every time they throw the ball, no matter how many balls come to them. Remind them to stay focused and concentrate on the ball. Do not allow them to toss balls to someone who is not looking. The person has to be ready to receive the ball before it is tossed.

The skills they use in this game are some of the same skills they will need to develop in acting -- focus, concentration, and the ability to give and receive cues. I tell my students after a successful run that they now know how an improvisational ensemble works. They give and receive cues in organized chaos.

Variation: Once this game is established, we introduce props from our juggling bag. We use a beanbag frog, a deflated volley ball, a rubber chicken, etc. You can introduce any props you may have on hand. These props surprise students, make them laugh, and help them roll with the punches.

<u>Ball Game Two</u>: Still standing in a circle, put away all the balls and props. Now bring out your imaginary ball. Play with it. Toss it in the air and catch it, showing the weight of the ball and the impact it has when it touches your hand. Now keeping it the same size and weight, toss it to someone in the circle using the same process as before - make eye contact, say the name out loud, and toss the ball. They should catch it the same size and weight. That person tosses the ball to another person. You can use the same pattern as before or establish a new pattern, but each person should catch and toss the ball before it returns to you. When it returns to you, change its weight and size. Let each person have a turn with the different weight and size. Change the ball every time it returns to you. Make it as large, heavy, light, or small as you can.

This game is an excellent introduction to pantomime, acting without words. The students should engage in the play. Encourage them to use their whole bodies to express throwing and catching the ball. Let them take their time with this. You will know when everyone is engaged and concentrating because they will not want to stop.

Follow-up Activities: These games are intended as a warm-up for theatrical activities, so the immediate follow-up will be the theatrical activity. However, at another time -- perhaps after the theatrical activity -- lead a class discussion about how these activities prepare you to interact in improvisation or to work together in acting. How do they loosen the body and mind and free the imagination? How do they enhance group skills? Ask students to describe other games they have played that had similar effects.

Divide the students into groups and ask each group to develop a quick warm-up game that they can share with the class.   Lead a class discussion about which games are the most successful and why.

Ask students who would be interested in the directions for the warm-up games they have developed. Teachers? Other students? Camp counselors or youth group leaders? Their cousin Fred in California?

Ask students to write a how-to story to explain the game to their target audience. Remind them that a good how-to story must catch the interest of the reader in the opening sentence. In other words, they need a "hook" to catch their reader's attention. The directions that follow must be clear and concise, and the piece must end with a wrap-up or suggestions for extensions.

The best way to edit this type of writing is to give it to someone who has not seen your game and see if that person can actually figure out how to play the game. If so, your directions are clear. If not, listen to your reader's questions and let those questions guide your revision.

Exposition
Activity Contributed by H. Allen Pensol

Grade level:	**High school**
Materials:	**Short scene (any will do) from a play that is unfamiliar to the students.**
Time:	**60 minutes**

Core Content Addressed:

Creating/Performing: Analyze descriptions, dialogues, and actions within a script to discover, articulate, and justify character motivation. (2.22, 2.23, 2.24, 2.25, 2.26)

Responding: Using a short script, identify and describe the characters, their relationships, and their environments. (2.24, 2.25, 2.26)

Dramatic Elements and Terminology: Exposition

Overview: This activity helps students understand exposition -- the information put before an audience that gives the where, when, why, and who facts of a play. Students will demonstrate an understanding of background information in a play by writing a short exposition for a scene. **Activity:** Select a short scene from a play and have students read the dialogue and stage directions. Assign parts to be read aloud in class.

Lead a class discussion about what is happening in the scene. Guide the discussion so that time, place, and setting are considered. Students should begin to question and understand what took place before the scene occurred.

Divide the students into small groups and explain that each group will write a short expository paragraph supporting the lines of dialogue in the scene. Explain that the paragraphs cannot alter the action of the scene. Make certain that the students understand that they are giving background information based on the dialogue and stage directions.

Ask students what information they think should be included. Lead a brainstorming session and record the information on the board or on chart paper. Ask students leading questions so that they include setting (time, place, location), characters (age, ethnic background, occupation, relationship to other characters, personality, motivation) and one to two incidents that caused the scene to take place.

Give the teams approximately thirty minutes to complete their expositions. Have each group present their exposition and discuss whether each piece supports the scene. Compare and contrast the conclusions reached by various groups. Ask students to identify how background information is embedded in dialogue and stage directions. Discuss the facts that theatre evokes different responses in different viewers and that scenes can be interpreted in different ways.

Follow-up Activities:

1. Have students read the entire play and review their expositions. Do they now have information that makes them want to revise their first interpretation?

2. Have groups of student videotape a thirty minute TV program. Have them show a seven minute clip in class. Have the other students write a beginning and/or ending for the show based on the information given in the clip.

3. Have students develop a character sketch based on a few lines of dialogue from a scene.

4. Have students work in small groups to write a short play to be performed by elementary students for primary students. You may assign the topic and purpose (such as health or safety issues) or allow students to brainstorm topics that were important to them as primary students.

Ask students to begin by writing a short exposition of their proposed play, describing the characters, their relationship to one another, the setting, and the basic plot. Lead a class discussion of how to embed background information into the dialogue and stage directions. Remind students that they are writing a play to be performed by elementary students for primary students. They must keep their performers and final audience in mind as they develop their play.

If possible, have the students perform their play for the elementary class that will perform the play for the primary class. Ask the students to facilitate a discussion with the elementary students that allows the elementary students to explain their interpretation of the characters, setting, and plot. Do the elementary students identify the background information that your students intended to embed in the play?

Elementary Drama Assessment

DRAMATIC ELEMENTS & TERMINOLOGY

Plot or storyline, Beginning, middle, end, dialogue, monologue, conflict

ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION

Visual (Scenery, Costumes, Props, & Makeup), Sound & Music, Design, Audience, Roles - Directing, Lighting, Research for authenticity)

CREATIVE DRAMATICS

Improvisation, Mimicry, Pantomime, Role Playing, Storytelling

ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE

Character, Movement, Vocal Expression, Speaking Style, Concentration, Listening, Roles - Acting, Storytelling

HISTORY/CULTURE

Folktales, Myths, Legends (West Africa, Native America, Colonial America)

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HS Drama Assessment

DRAMATIC ELEMENTS & TERMINOLOGY
Exposition, Development, Climax, Reversal,
Denouement (Freytag Pyramid), Protagonist, Antagonist,
Tension, Foreshadowing

ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION
Production styles, Roles & interrelatedness of personnel
(theatre, film, television, other electronic media)

ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE
Monologue, Dialogue, Soliloquy, Duet, Ensemble,
Tools (body, voice, script), Sensory recall

HISTORY/CULTURE, STYLES, & PERIODS
Beginning with Ancient and continuing through present
(See chart in humanities document)

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MS Drama Assessment

DRAMATIC ELEMENTS & TERMINOLOGY
Plot development, Rising action, Turning point, Falling action, Suspense, Theme, Language, Empathy, Motivation, Discovery

ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION
Functions & interrelatedness of scenery, props, lighting, sound, costumes and make-up
Stage directions, Spectacle, Theatre jobs (training & skills of each)
Types of staging (arena, thrust, proscenium)

ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE
Breath control, Diction, Body alignment, Body control

HISTORY/CULTURE
Greek, Elizabethan, Modern

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Historical and Cultural Awareness

PERIODS OF HISTORY

Classical Greek

Elizabethan

Modern/Contemporary

Begin with Ancient and continue through present
(Refer to the drama chart in the humanities section)

DRAMA

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Reference Chart		Responding
Major Movements/Time Periods/Cultures:	**Theatre**	Describe how different media, techniques, and processes used in theatre production can create different effects and cause different personal responses for the audience. (2.22, 2.23) Identify and discuss a variety of sources for the content of theatre, film, and television. (2.22, 2.24) Compare and contrast how ideas and emotions are expressed in theatre with how they are expressed in dance, music, and visual arts. (2.22, 2.23, 2.24) Analyze and discuss how an individual's cultural experience affects creating and performing in theatre. (2.22, 2.23, 2.26) Describe and compare the interactions among performing and visual artists and audience members in theatre, musical theatre, dance, music, and visual arts. (2.22, 2.23) Describe and compare the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from various genres and media. (2.22, 2.23, 2.24, 2.25, 2.26) Compare how similar themes are treated in drama from various cultures and historical periods, and discuss how theatre can reveal universal themes. (2.23, 2.24, 2.25, 2.26) Identify specific dramatic works as belonging to particular styles, cultures, times, and places. (See The Arts and Humanities Reference Chart). (2.25, 2.26)
Ancient and lineage-based Cultures Near Eastern, African, European, Native American	religious ritual and ceremony storytelling	
Pacific Rim - Asian Culture China, Japan, India, Malaysia	Noh Kabuki	
Classical Greece and Rome 800 BC-400 AD Instructs and perfects humans: ritual worship. Presents the universal ideal of beauty through logic, order, reason, and moderation	tragedy Sophocles	
Medieval 800-1400 Instructs in Christian faith. Appeals to the emotions, stresses importance of religion.		
Renaissance 1400-1600 Reconciles Christian faith and reason. Promotes "rebirth" of the classical ideal. Allows new freedom of thought.	Commedia oell' Arte Shakespeare	
Neo-Classicism/"Classical" 1720-1827 Style in music. Reacts to the excesses of monarchy and ornamentation of the Baroque. Returns to order, reason and structural clarity.	satire	
Romanticism 1760-1870 Revolts against neo-classical order/reason. Returns to nature/imagination: freedom, emotion, sentimentality, spontaneity; interest in the exotic, primitive and supernatural.	melodrama	
Realism 1820-1920 Seeks the truth. Finds beauty in the commonplace. Focuses on the industrial revolution and the conditions of working class.	Chekhov	
Modern and Contemporary 1900-Present Breaks with or re-defines the conventions of the past. Uses experimental techniques. Shows the diversity of society and the blending of cultures.	musical theatre contemporary comedy/tragedy	
For a list of skills and knowledge, see theatre section.		

106

Major Movements/Time Periods/Cultures:	Dance	Music	Theatre	Visual Arts	Literature
Ancient and lineage-based Cultures Near Eastern, African, European, Native American	ritual in African dance/ Native American dance		storytelling religious ritual and ceremony	African masks pyramids	Gilgamesh Epic
Pacific Rim - Asian Cultures China, Japan, India, Malaysia			Noh Kabuki	ceramics textiles	
Classical Greece and Rome 800BC-400AD Instructs and perfects humans: ritual worship. Presents the universal ideal of beauty through logic, order, reason, and moderation		Pythagoras - music theory	tragedy Sophocles	Discus Thrower The Parthenon	Homer Plato
Islamic and Judaic 500-700 Worships without "graven images." Decorates surfaces of useful objects				Islamic architecture	*Torah* *Koran* *Bible*
Medieval 800-1400 Instructs in Christian faith. Appeals to the emotions, stresses importance of religion.	Tarantella	Gregorian Chant beginning of polyphony		Romanesque Gothic architecture	Chaucer Dante
Renaissance 1400-1600 Reconciles Christian faith and reason. Promotes "rebirth" of the classical ideal. Allows new freedom of thought.	court dances	counterpoint Josquin des Prez	Commedia dell' Arte Shakespeare	DaVinci Michelangelo	Machiavelli Shakespeare
Baroque 1580-1700 Rejects the limits of previous styles. Restores the power of the monarchy /church: excess, ornamentation, contrasts, tensions, energy.	Development of ballet by Louis XIV	fugue Bach Vivaldi		Rembrandt	Shakespeare
Neo-Classicism/ "Classical"1720-1827 Style in music. Reacts to the excesses of monarchy and ornamentation of the Baroque. Returns to order, reason and structural clarity.		Mozart Beethoven Haydn	satire	David	Swift
Romanticism 1760-1870 Revolts against neo-classical order/ reason. Returns to nature/ imagination: freedom, emotion, sentimentality, spontaneity; interest in the exotic, primitive and supernatural.	Golden Age of Ballet	Beethoven Tchaikovsky Wagner	melodrama	Constable	Dickinson Wordsworth
Realism 1820-1920 Seeks the truth. Finds beauty in the commonplace. Focuses on the industrial revolution and the conditions of working class.	folk and social dance		Chekhov	Courbet	Cather Dickens Twain
Impressionism and Post-Impressionism 1850-1920 Shows the effects of light and atmospheric conditions. Spontaneously captures a moment of time. Expresses reality in different ways.		Debussy		Monet Van Gogh Cassatt	K. Chopin Crane
Modern and Contemporary 1900-Present Breaks with or re-defines the conventions of the past. Uses experimental techniques. Shows the diversity of society and the blending of cultures.	Graham	Stravinsky jazz Ellington folk/popular Copland	musical theatre contemporary comedy/ tragedy	Picasso O' Keeffe Lange Warhol Dali Wright	Dunbar Eliot Giles Hughes Steinbeck R. P. Warren

107